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RALIN ENTERPRISES INC.

ALWAYS AHEAD OF OUR TIME

Raymond C. Bell Linda D. Bell Peggy Campbell President Vice- President General Manager Director of Marketing DOCKET SECTION December 24, 1997

Docket Clerk Room PL-401 400 7th St. SW Washington D.C. 20590

I recently read an exsert in Land Line Magazine, Nov/Dec issue, regarding your solicitation for comments or real life experiences pertaining to reading of the English language by commercial drivers.

While employed for Lester Coggins Trucking, Okuhumpka, Fl., as a trainer, I was requested to take a new hire driver on a "orientation run". During our trip I was asked to acquaint the driver with the company policies and procedures. This driver was in his late 50's and had been driving for over 30 years.

Initially I formed the opinion that this person simply would not listen to instruction. However, when this driver turned the rig onto a one way street in THE WRONG DIRECTION, it occurred to me he simply could not read. As I worked with this person, I was proven correct.

This driver had worked the same job all his life and driven the same route. But now he was being asked by a over the road carrier to negotiate a full rig across this country. This requires tasks such as reading signs, interpreting information from signs such as low underpasses, restricted routes, truck stop locations, etc. Furthermore, how will this individual read an atlas? How can he possibly look in map index's to locate cities or research proper truck routes? How will he ever read and understand the FHWA guidelines or "green book"? And we haven't even touched upon all the material required of a driver to read and follow on docks at different shippers. Anything from a "no entry sign" to a computer printout regarding your shipment.

And how about HAZ MAT!! Now there's a scary thought. A hazardous load going down the road with a driver who hasn't even read the warning labels, guidelines or procedures, let alone the hazardous materials guide book! What happens if his rig becomes involved in a spill? He can't even read enough to protect himself, let alone the public.

Well you ask, this person wasn't hired was he? Oh!, but he was. You see motor carriers today are much more interested in QUANTITY, not QUALITY, of drivers.

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Here also is another perspective. Our President and his administration are attempting to address the severe problem of our school's graduates entering the work force completely illiterate. In this country we are seeking to establish minimal guidelines and expectations whereby a person must be able to read and write as well as DESIRE to read and write.

Now comes the FHWA seeking to establish a precedent whereby a person can obtain a good job at above average wage and be exempt from having to read and write!! This is in direct conflict with our country's goals and objectives in the literacy fight!

The answer is NO! If you wish to drive a commercial vehicle, you must be able to read and write the English language, period!

Sincerely,

Raymond C. Bell, President

Raymond Bell

Ralin Enterprises Inc.